

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

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November 2013

***NO DOUBT THIS LIFE IS AN EXAMINATION
WHICH NEEDS YOUR FULL CONSIDERATION
AS TO WHAT YOU WILL TAKE TO
YOUR FINAL DESTINATION
ONLY TRUE BELIEF AND GOOD DEEDS ARE
YOUR WAY TO SALVATION***

(Muhammad Sherif)

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Honorific phrases in this book

(the Exalted)	Used after the mention of God/Allah to express: Glorified and Exalted is He
(blessings and peace be upon him)	Blessings and peace be upon him; used after mention of the Prophet Muhammad
(peace be upon him)	Peace be upon him; used after mention of any prophet or after mention of Angel Gabriel
(May Allah be pleased with him)	used after mention of a male Companion of the Prophet Muhammad
(May Allah be pleased with her)	used after mention of a female Companion of the Prophet Muhammad

About the word ‘Lord’

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is ‘master’ or ‘ruler’ and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: ‘the lord of the mansion’ or ‘*Lord So-and-So*’ (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God - Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah - not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor

About the word 'Allah'

Although the English word ‘God’ has often been used interchangeably in this book with the word Allah, there is a difference. ‘Allah’ is the word in Arabic that is translated as ‘God’. However, ‘Allah’ has a much more precise meaning than ‘God’. ‘Allah’ is not merely an Arabic term for the word ‘god’. Instead, the root word of the word ‘Allah’ is *ilâh*, which means ‘a god’. There are countless numbers of made-up ‘gods’, but only One True God whose name is Allah. The word ‘Allah’ literally means ‘the worshipped’. Allah is, thus, the proper name for the **only Being that is worthy of worship**, the True Creator of the universe. By saying ‘Allah’, Muslims are, in essence, negating every other entity which people wrongfully worship. The name ‘Allah’ is how God Almighty has referred to Himself in the Qur'an¹, and how Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) also referred to Him. Therefore, in this

¹ The Qur'an is the sacred book or scripture revealed to Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him). A detailed explanation of the Qur'an has been given in chapter 9: “The Six Articles of Islamic Faith.”

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work, the term ‘Allah’ will often be used in reference to this One and Only God, who is worthy of worship.

Preface

Wise individuals know that they exist for a purpose and a final destination, whether or not they are aware of the exact nature of that destination. Wise individuals also understand that if they do not know where they are going, they will never strive to reach there. This little book has shed some light on the following:

- ❖ Why were human beings created?
- ❖ What is their final destination?
- ❖ How can they reach that destination ‘safely’?

With this short preface, I leave you to peruse the book.

Kind regards

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Introduction

Every individual is born into a religious environment that is not necessarily in accordance with his or her choice; children are raised to follow the religion or ideology of their family, society or culture. Even as new-borns, they are assigned either the religion of their family or the ideology of the state; in some countries, the child's assigned religion is even recorded on the birth certificate. By the time individuals reach their teens, they have usually accepted the beliefs of their parents or their particular society, feeling that they have little choice in the matter.

However, individuals often encounter, or are exposed, to various beliefs and ideologies throughout the course of their lives, leading many to question long-held beliefs, traditions or philosophical ideas. They begin to question the validity of their own beliefs. Seekers of truth often reach a point of confusion, especially upon realizing that the believers of every religion, sect, ideology and philosophy claim to profess the one and only truth.

There are only three possibilities: either everyone is correct or everyone is incorrect; or, only one is correct and the rest are incorrect. It is impossible for all of them to be upon the true religion as the fundamentals of all religions are different. On the

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other hand, to claim that they are all incorrect is to deny that Allah (*Subhānahu wa Ta’ālā* - Glorified and Exalted is He) revealed His will to humankind. This proposition will seem absurd to those who believe in a Wise Creator. After all, why would Allah create human beings and not reveal a way to the truth? So, **which religion is the right one and how can the seeker of truth come to know it?** This is the main subject of this work.

When beginning the search for the true religion, one should keep the following four things in mind:

Firstly, Allah has given us the ability and the intellect to discover the answer to this crucial question, which is also a life-changing decision: **What is the true religion?**

Secondly, Allah, the Most Compassionate, has not left us to go astray without any guidance. Indeed, He sent us prophets with scriptures to show us the right path.

Thirdly, always remember the underlying reason for this search: the ever-lasting life to come depends upon finding the true religion in this life. This should be your ultimate

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motivation, and a driving force to keep you searching until you are completely satisfied.²

Fourthly, one can only determine the true path and make a rational and correct decision if one willingly puts aside all the emotions and prejudices, which often blind one to reality.

² The Bible, in its present form, confirms that seeking the truth is the main cause for salvation. In John 8:32, it has been stated, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Muslims believe that the existing form of the Bible contains elements of the original true message, although it has been altered significantly.

1. Proof of Allah's Existence

This great universe and everything that is in it cannot be the product of chance, and could not have created itself. Signs testifying that Allah is the only Creator can be seen throughout the earth and in the very soul of each person. Allah has said in the Qur'an:

{It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth and sent down rain from the sky and produced thereby some fruits as provision for you and subjected for you the ships to sail through the sea by His command and subjected for you the rivers. And He subjected for you the sun and moon, continuous [in orbit], and subjected for you the night and the day. And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favour of Allah, you could not enumerate them...} (*Qur'an 14: 32-34*)³

³ The translations of the meanings of the Qur'anic verses in this book have been taken from Saheeh International. *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meaning*.

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In the Qur'an, Allah has mentioned the search of Prophet Abraham ('alayhi as-salâm - peace be upon him)⁴ for the truth. This is an example of how those who follow Allah's signs will be rightly guided to the worship of Him alone. Allah has said:

{And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain [in faith]. So when the night covered him [with darkness], he saw a star. He said: This is my lord. But when it set, he said: I like not those that disappear. And when he saw the moon rising, he said: This is my lord. But when it set, he said: Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray. And when he saw the sun rising, he said: This is my lord; this is greater. But when it set, he said: O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah.} (*Qur'an* 6: 75-79)

⁴ This is an expression of respect which Prophet Muhammad (*salla Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* - blessings and peace be upon him) has recommended us to say each time a prophet is mentioned.

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The strongest proof for Allah's existence is the creation itself. Allah continuously instructs humankind to observe the universe, as this will affirm the divine truth of His existence and His greatness along with the fact that He alone should be worshipped.

Another obvious fact: **He answers our prayers.** When an individual prays (supplicates) to Allah, He answers his or her prayer; this is an indication of Allah's existence. Allah has said in the Qur'an:

{And your Lord says: Call upon Me; I will respond to you...}
(Qur'an 40: 60)

2. The Purpose of Creation

Have you ever wondered why we exist? What is the reason for our existence? Have you ever wondered why we die, and where we will go after death? What will happen to us in the end? Have you ever asked yourself why Allah has made the earth and all that is in it subservient to human beings? Why were the night and the day, and the sun and the moon created? What are we supposed to do during our lifetime? Were we created just to eat, drink, and enjoy ourselves before we die? A poet has summarized this timeless question:

I do not know whence I have come.

I saw my feet walking on the road.

As they please I go and stop.

What am I doing here?

How did the road find me?

I do not know! I do not know! I do not know!

Allah has emphasized in many verses of the Qur'an that He did not create human beings without a purpose. He has said:

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{Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?} (*Qur'an* 23: 115)⁵

He has also said:

{Does man think that he will be left neglected?} (*Qur'an* 75: 36)

In addition, He has said:

{Do the people think that they will be left to say: We believe, and they will not be tried?} (*Qur'an* 29: 2)

It is clear from these verses that human beings were not created without a purpose; this purpose has been mentioned clearly in another verse which says:

{And I did not create the *jinn*⁶ and humankind except to worship Me.} (*Qur'an* 51: 56)

Hence, the main purpose of creation is **to worship the Creator Alone**. This is called monotheism.

⁵ Please note that any quotation in this book from the Qur'an is the translation that we feel has the closest meaning to its original Arabic. The translation is not the Qur'an itself.

⁶ *jinn*: non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire.

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Islam sets a vision for human beings, which is strikingly simple yet completely logical. Indeed, why would the Creator of the universe shroud the main message He wants humankind to understand, their one key to winning paradise in the hereafter, in mystery? How then would He expect humankind to arrive at the truth? It is clear that humankind must revert to its basic instinct regarding the Creator of the universe; it must shed the layers of indoctrinated ideologies and man-made teachings it is covered with. Humankind must reclaim its birthright; it must reclaim Islam.

3. Monotheism: the Message of all the Prophets

All the prophets instructed their people to worship Allah alone (monotheism) and shun worshipping His creation (paganism). Allah has said:

{And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying]: Worship Allah and avoid *tâghoot*⁷...} (*Qur'an* 16: 36)

Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), for example, believed in One God (Allah), Who has no partner. The Qur'an has explained:

{And [We sent] Abraham, when he said to his people: Worship Allah and fear Him. That is best for you, if you should know.} (*Qur'an* 29: 16)

Allah has also said about him:

⁷ Tâghoot means idols; everything evil that is worshipped besides Allah.

Note: Wherever possible, Arabic terms have been translated into English. In cases where we have chosen to retain the Arabic, the transliterated word or phrase is shown in italics the first time it appears in the text; the term is also defined in the glossary found at the end of this book. (Editor)

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{And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said to his father and his people: Indeed, I am disassociated from that which you worship, except for He who created me; and indeed, He will guide me.} (*Qur'an* 43: 26-27)

Although the Bible has been altered a great deal, Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was reported in the Gospels to have said, “It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.” (Luke 4:8)

It also mentions that God has said, “I am the first, and I am the last, and besides Me there is no God.” (Isaiah 44:6)

“The Lord our God is one Lord.” (Mark 12:29)

The Book of Acts 3:13 says, “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant⁸ Jesus.”

Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) also said (as mentioned in the Qur'an) to his people:

⁸ The use of the word ‘servant’ does not imply that Allah needs assistance or help. It equals to 'slave' which means ‘the one devoted in worship’ by obeying His commands and shunning what He forbids.

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{You worship not besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allah. He has commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.} (*Qur'an 12: 40*)

This is why Allah has described those who deviate from Abraham's message (monotheism) as the ones who are fooling themselves. He has said:

{And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself...} (*Qur'an 2: 130*)

4. The Basic Message of Islam

The basic message of Islam is the same as the message of all the previous prophets: worship Allah **alone** and avoid worshipping anything besides Him, whether it is a person, place or thing: directly or indirectly, secretly or openly. This basic principle of monotheism is contained in the fifth verse of the opening chapter of the Qur'an, known as 'The Opening':

{It is You we worship and You we ask for help.} (*Qur'an 1: 5*)

Allah has also said:

{Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him...} (*Qur'an 4: 36*)

{...So whoever disbelieves in tâghoot and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it...} (*Qur'an 2: 256*)

Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), the last prophet, is reported to have said: <<Anyone who says: There is

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none worthy of worship other than Allah, and dies holding that belief, will be granted paradise.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)⁹

⁹ *Saheeh al-Bukhâri* and *Saheeh Muslim* are two collections of the authentic, documented traditions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him). Other collections have also been used as references in this book.

5. Proofs that Only Allah Deserves to be Worshipped

Here is an obvious fact: **Allah is the sole Creator and Sustainer of everything.** This makes Him the only one deserving of your worship. It's really that simple. Supplication, for example, is an act of worship, where the individual directs his or her heart to Allah and specifies to Him his or her needs. Allah has instructed in the Qur'an to call upon Him,

{And your Lord says: Call upon Me; I will respond to you...}
(*Qur'an 40: 60*)

The question then arises as to why people direct their worship to created objects, such as idols. The fact is that the idols have no power of their own; anything which results from that act of worship only comes about through the permission of Allah. Hence, if a person prays to an idol and his or her prayers are answered, it is not the idol which actually answered his prayers, but Allah. Similarly, prayers to Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), Buddha, Krishna, Saint Christopher, Saint Jude or Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), are not answered by them; instead, they are answered by Allah. Consequently, prayer directed to anyone or anything other than Allah is of no avail. The same applies to all acts of worship, like

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prayers, charity and fasting. All have to be directed to Allah alone.

The prophets were very explicit in their teachings that only Allah should be worshipped; they themselves were sent to teach this very message. They claimed neither fame nor status, and never once did they instruct the people to direct acts of worship to them. Instead, they warned their people against doing just that. For example, Islam teaches that Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was a human being who was created by Allah in a miraculous way. He was born of a mother, Mary, without a father and he worshipped Allah. He was neither a God (Allah) nor the son of God. He was neither one of three manifestations of God, as Christians claim, nor was he the son of a prostitute, as some Jews have alleged. He told his people (the tribes of Israel) to worship Allah alone. He did not tell people to worship either himself or his mother. Furthermore, Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) did not worship himself when he worshipped; he worshipped Allah alone.

However, those who claim to be the followers of Jesus Christ actually do something other than what he taught; they worship Jesus himself. Others worship Mary, claiming she is the mother of Allah. If Jesus did not instruct them to worship

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him or his mother, how can one do this very act and yet claim to follow his message?

Allah has said in the Qur'an:

{They have certainly disbelieved who say: Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary, while the Messiah has said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Indeed, he who associates others with Allah - Allah has forbidden him paradise, and his abode is the fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers.} (*Qur'an 5: 72*)

Allah has also warned in the Qur'an that He will ask Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) on the Day of Judgement regarding the Christians' worship of him and his mother:

{And [beware the day] when Allah will say: O Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah? He will say: Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen. I said not to them except what You commanded me - to worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them as long as I was among them; but when You took me up, You were the Observer over them, and You are, over all things, Witness.} (*Qur'an 5: 116-117*)

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Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was given life; he was born from a woman's womb and was circumcised. He felt hunger, pain, and weariness. Since all these attributes are those of human beings and not of God (Allah), it is clear that Jesus was not God (Allah).

Similarly, Buddha was a reformer who introduced a number of humanistic principles into the Hindu religion practiced in India. He did not claim to be God, nor did he suggest to his followers that he should be worshipped. Yet today, most Buddhists have made him their God and they prostrate themselves before idols representing his likeness. Furthermore, over the ages, in the supposedly monotheistic religions like Judaism and Christianity, followers have allowed a select few human beings to be accorded the status of a law-giver where those laws are in direct contradiction to Allah's laws; this has become the case with their rabbis and church officials. This is a form of creature-worship. Allah has mentioned:

{They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah...} (*Qur'an 9: 31*)

Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) explained this verse to mean that by unquestioningly obeying them in things which they made lawful or unlawful according to

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their desires, without any sanction from Allah, they have given these rabbis and priests the status of deities. Briefly, from the perspective of object-worship, all religions today (except Islam) invite people to the worship of creation in one form or another!

It should be noted that some (non-Muslim) people incorrectly label Islam as ‘Mohammedanism’. This phenomenon exists because it is tempting to elevate Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) to a status far above his teachings, as in the case of all the other religions. This is ironic since his very message was the negation of equating man (**any** man) with Allah. Islam teaches that Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) was a human messenger, who, including himself, is required to worship Allah rather than be elevated to the status of Allah and be worshipped. Muhammad was a messenger **and** a slave¹⁰ of Allah; that is all.

¹⁰ The status of a ‘slave’ of Allah is the most beloved and honoured position before Allah, since it implies sincere worship and love for Him. This status applies to all messengers and true followers. More detail has been mentioned in chapter 11: “The Meaning of Worship in Islam.”

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Allah's attributes prove that He alone deserves to be worshipped.

He is One, without relatives; He has no father, son, mother or wife. He is the Eternal Absolute. He neither gives birth nor was He born; indeed, there is nothing like Him. He is perfect in His knowledge, in His power, in His will, in His mercy and in all His other attributes. Allah is all-powerful and perfect, while human beings are weak and imperfect. That is how He has defined Himself and how all prophets have defined Him.¹¹ Therefore, it is only befitting that one directs all acts of worship to the One who fits this description. Worshipping anything else would be futile.

¹¹ This agrees with what is mentioned in the Gospel of Barnabas, chapter 17, where Jesus said:

He alone hath no equal. He hath had no beginning, nor will he ever have an end, but to everything hath He given a beginning, and to everything shall He give an end. He hath no father nor mother; He hath no sons nor brethren nor companions.

(The Gospel of Barnabas is not included in today's Bible, but it is available on the Internet - Editor.)

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Another proof is the teaching of Islam that every soul has been imbued with the awareness of Allah and a natural inclination towards worshipping Him alone. In the Qur'an, Allah has explained that when He created Adam (peace be upon him), He caused all of Adam's descendants to come into existence; then, He took a pledge from all of them, saying:

{...Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, we have testified...} *(Qur'an 7: 172)*

Allah has then explained why He had all of humankind bear witness that He is their Creator and the only true God, the only one worthy of worship:

{...[This] - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: Indeed, we were of this unaware.} *(Qur'an 7: 172)*

Allah has further elaborated on this point, saying:

{Or [lest] you say: It was only that our fathers associated [others in worship] with Allah before, and we were but descendants after them. Then would You destroy us for what the falsifiers have done?} *(Qur'an 7: 173)*

Therefore, people who associate partners with Allah in worship cannot claim on that day that they had no idea that Allah is the only one who deserves to be worshipped.

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Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) reported that Allah has said:

<<I created my slaves following the right religion, but the devils made them go astray.>> (Muslim)

Also, Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<Each child is born in a state of Islam. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)

Thus, Islam is the **birthright** of every human being, since every child is born with a natural belief in the existence of Allah and an inborn inclination towards worshipping Him alone. Just as the child submits to the physical laws which Allah has imposed on this physical world, its soul submits naturally to the fact that Allah is the only Lord and Creator. However, if his or her parents are following a different path, the child is usually neither strong nor aware enough to recognize the truth; also, he or she cannot resist the will of the parents. In such cases, the religion the child ultimately follows is in line with custom and upbringing. However, Allah, the Most Merciful and Compassionate, will not hold him or her to account or punish for following a false religion before he or she reaches the age of reason and is exposed to the pure message of Islam.

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To sum up, one can naturally, without the aid of other human influences, come to the conclusion that only Allah deserves to be worshipped. This conclusion is neither confusing nor elaborate; it can be arrived at by even the most uneducated.

6. The Message of False Religions

False religions, on the other hand, all teach **the worship of creation (paganism)** in one way or another. Some religions call towards idolatry indirectly, while proclaiming Allah's unity; others openly invite one to the worship of other gods besides Allah or along with Allah, instead of calling towards the worship of Allah alone (pure monotheism). Idolatry is the greatest sin that a human being can commit because it diverts worship from the Creator to His creation. It necessarily implies elevating the creation to the status of Allah and thus, equating creation with Him. This explains why idolatry is the greatest sin a human being can commit. The one who dies in a state of idolatry has sealed his or her fate in the hereafter. Allah has stated in the Qur'an:

{Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills...} (*Qur'an 4: 48*)¹²

Human beings should not worship anything or anyone other than Allah. This is because it makes no sense to worship

¹² See also (*Qur'an 4: 116*).

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the creation which is weak in nature, and to neglect the Creator who controls this creation and the whole universe! Not only is this act misdirected and futile, it is a manifestation of ingratitude to the One who has created everything. Allah has said in the Qur'an:

{Do they associate with Him those who create nothing and they are [themselves] created? And the false deities are unable to [give] them help, nor can they help themselves. And if you [believers] invite them to guidance, they will not follow you. It is all the same for you whether you invite them or you are silent. Indeed, those you [polytheists] call upon besides Allah are slaves like you. So call upon them and let them respond to you, if you should be truthful. Do they have feet by which they walk? Or do they have hands by which they strike? Or do they have eyes by which they see? Or do they have ears by which they hear?...} (*Qur'an 7: 191-195*)

Some idol worshippers try to justify what they are doing by saying, "We treat idols as mediators and intercessors between us and Allah." This belief is based on the false comparison between Allah and kings, who often operate using mediators between them and their people. This is an incorrect belief because Allah does not need mediators between Him and His creation. He hears and knows everything, and can respond

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directly to all the needs of His creation. In hundreds of Qur'anic verses, Allah has invited human beings to have a direct relationship with Him without any mediator or intercessor; He has prohibited them from worshipping anything other than Him, under any circumstances.

The idea of having different deities (idols and statues) as intermediates and mere 'channels' is as old as time. Many non-Muslims, before the time of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), used to claim that they believed in Allah as the Creator and the Sustainer; however, they said that they merely used idols as a means of drawing closer to Allah or as a means of having prayers answered. This is still a common practice amongst many people today; they say they believe in one God, yet they maintain their reliance upon statues, superstitions and other symbols (or traditions) as a way to worship and invoke God for their needs.

Allah has rejected their claims, saying that when they are in trouble, whom do they call? They call none other than Allah. This is evidence that the concept of intercessors between a human being and God is false and of no benefit.

Allah has specified that anyone who attributes deity to others with Him will be left with that other entity on the Day of Judgement, calling to that entity for help. An individual falsely

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hopes that this entity will, somehow, help him or her when needed. However, this is of no avail because the entities themselves will disassociate themselves from the people on the Day of Judgement (when one is in need of most help). It will be asked of these people:

{...Where are those you used to invoke besides Allah? They will say: They have departed from us, and will bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers.} (*Qur'an* 7: 37)

Allah has said:

{Say, [O Muhammad]: Invoke those you claim [as deities] besides Allah. They do not possess an atom's weight [of ability] in the heavens or on the earth, and they do not have therein any partnership [with Him], nor is there for Him from among them any assistant.} (*Qur'an* 34: 22)

So, if these entities {do not possess an atom's weight [of ability] in the heavens or on the earth}, how can they help the one who worships them? Moreover, Allah has pointed out the simple fact that:

{And those you call upon besides Him are unable to help you, nor can they help themselves.} (*Qur'an* 7: 197)

Allah, the Most Wise, has not prescribed any religious beliefs and rites that would affect the direct relationship

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between Himself and humans; beliefs and rites such as Hinduism, Buddhism, baptism, confession, or belief in a human being as a saviour or an intermediary, have done just that.

7. Allah and His Creation

Islam emphasizes that Allah and His creation are distinct entities. Allah is neither part of His creation nor does He intermix with it. His creation is neither equal to Him in His attributes nor a part of Him. Indeed, Allah is the Most High; He is above all His creation, above the heavens and above His Throne, as He has informed us about Himself in the Qur'an and in the previous scriptures. This might seem obvious, but people's worship of creation instead of the Creator is, to a large degree, based on ignorance or negligence of this fact. The erroneous belief that the essence of Allah is everywhere in His creation or that He is a part of His creation, justifies the worship of Allah's creation. Philosophical idol worshippers justify their idolatry by saying that they do not actually worship the stone or metal image; they only worship Allah who becomes concentrated in it during their rituals of worship. They claim that the stone idol is only a focal point for Allah's essence and is not Allah itself! Anyone who accepts the concept of Allah being present in any way within His creation will be obliged to accept this argument to justify idolatry.

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Setting aside such motivations as financial gains or fame, people's claims to divinity have largely manifested based on the mistaken belief that it is possible for Allah to be present in humans. Taking this belief one step further, they claim that Allah is more present in them than in others, and people should therefore submit to them and worship them as Allah's incarnate or as Allah concentrated within their person. Similarly, those who have asserted that others were gods have found fertile ground among those who accept the false belief of Allah's presence in human beings.

As far as the doctrine of incarnation held by late Christians is concerned, it was developed after Jesus' departure. It was incorporated into Christianity from paganism. In the mythology that preceded Christianity, it can be seen how some heroes were considered to be gods.

The vast majority of Christians today pray to Jesus, claiming that he is God (Allah). The philosophers among them claim that they are not worshipping Jesus the man; they are only worshipping God (Allah), who was manifest in Jesus the man. This is also the rationale of pagans who bow down to worship the idols. As mentioned before, when a pagan philosopher is asked why he or she worships an idol which was made by

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human hands, he or she replies that he or she is not really worshipping the idol. Furthermore, he or she may claim that the idol is only a focal point for the presence of Allah, and thereby claim to worship Allah who is manifest in the idol, and not the physical idol itself. There is little or no difference between that explanation and the answer given by Christians for worshipping Jesus. The origin of this deviation lies in the false belief that Allah is present in His creation. Such a belief (erroneously) justifies the worship of Allah's creation.¹³

Islam has freed its followers from such superstitions by rejecting the doctrine of the incarnation. The divinity of Jesus has been rejected in the noble Qur'an in many verses. Let us take two of them:

{They have certainly disbelieved who say: Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary...} (*Qur'an 5: 72*)

{Say: He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets, nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.} (*Qur'an 112: 1-4*)

¹³ Philips, *The True Message of Jesus Christ*, 69.

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These two verses clearly specify that neither Jesus nor any other prophet resembles Him in an attribute or in essence, and hence, nothing can be an incarnation of Allah.

Consider the following. In the south-eastern region of the Amazon jungle in Brazil, South America, a primitive tribe erected a new hut to house their main idol Skwatoo, representing the supreme God (Allah) of all creation. The following day a young man entered the hut to pay homage to his god. While he was prostrating to what he had been taught was his creator and sustainer, a mangy, old and flea-ridden dog slunk into the hut. The young man looked up just in time to see the dog lift its hind leg and pass urine on the idol. Outraged, the young man chased the dog out of the temple, but when his rage died down, he realized that the idol could not be the Lord of the universe. He came to the conclusion that God must be elsewhere. As strange as it may seem, the dog urinating on the idol was a sign from God for that young man that his idol did not deserve to be worshipped. This sign contained the divine message that what he was worshipping was false. It liberated him from following his tradition unquestioningly, a

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tradition that proved to be erroneous. As a result, this man was given a choice: either to seek the true God or to continue in the error of his ways. This example illustrates the fact that humans are capable at arriving at the truth on their own, regardless of society, etc.¹⁴

Clearly, if one follows this argument, it means that either God does not have the attributes He claims or that God is no different than His own creation. Both negate the idea of an All-Powerful God, so both must be false. Islam teaches that God is too great and perfect to lower Himself to a level of likeness to His creation or mix with them.

To conclude, all false religions have in common one basic concept with regard to God: God and His creation are one. They either claim that all humans are God, or specific people are God, or nature is God, or God is a figment of people's imagination, or a person or being is a mediator between people and God (as mentioned in previous chapter). Thus, by equating the two, it may be said that false religions invite humans to worship the creation instead of worshipping the Creator.

¹⁴ Philips, *The True Religion of God*.

8. The Meaning of the Religion's Name: ‘Islam’

Further evidence that Islam is the true religion comes from the meaning of the word ‘Islam’ itself. Basically, the word ‘Islam’ is an Arabic word that denotes submission and obedience. As a religion, Islam has two meanings: general and specific. Islam, in general, refers to the religion which God revealed to all the prophets: the worship of God alone (monotheism) and the avoidance of paganism. This explains why, in the Qur'an, all prophets have called themselves Muslims. According to the Qur'an, all the prophets were Muslims; what they taught was nothing but earlier versions of Islam. Their sincere followers were Muslims as well.¹⁵ Consequently, one should not regard Islam as an innovation that was brought by Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be

¹⁵ Jesus was reported to have said in the Bible:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one title shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18)

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upon him). Instead, it should be regarded as the original message of Allah (in its fundamentals) to all the prophets throughout history. Specifically, the word ‘Islam’ also refers to the religion that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him). None of the previous religions were **specifically given** this name by Allah, except for this last religion - Islam.

Islam was neither named after a person or a group of people, nor was it decided upon by later generations of humans. Indeed, the name ‘Islam’ was given by Allah Himself as is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an in many verses, for example:

{Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam...} (*Qur'an 3: 19*)

On the other hand, Christianity was named (by its followers) after Jesus Christ, and Judaism after the tribe of Judah. However, it is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible that the religion of the followers of Prophets Isaac and Moses (peace be upon them) and their descendants is called Judaism, or that the religion of the followers of Christ¹⁶ is called Christianity. In

¹⁶ Both the names ‘Jesus’ and ‘Christ’ are derived from Hebrew words, through Greek and Latin. Jesus is the English equivalent and

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other words, the names ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’ had no divine origin or approval. It was not until long after Jesus’ ascension¹⁷ that the name ‘Christianity’ was given to the religion of those claiming to be his followers. The same applies to Buddhism, which was named after Gautama Buddha, Confucianism after Confucius, and Hinduism after the Persian word for India, ‘Hind’, and so on.

Another reason for calling Christians, Buddhists and others as such is because their followers worship them (in the case of Christ and Buddha). However, Muslims are not called ‘Muhammadans’ because Muslims do not worship Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him); they worship ‘Allah’ and submit to Him alone. In fact, this phenomenon of naming an ideology after a person has become so common that many

Latin form of the Greek ‘Iesous’, which in Hebrew is ‘Yeshua’. ‘Christos’ is a Greek translation of the Hebrew ‘messiah’, and the Arabic *masaha* which means to rub, to massage, to anoint.

¹⁷ The Qur'an has mentioned that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified on a cross; rather, Allah raised him to the heavens. Jesus will come into this world again before it ends. This has been discussed in detail, later in this book.

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mistakenly label Islam as ‘Mohammedanism’, although Muslims have never used, nor do they accept, such a label.

9. The Six Articles of Islamic Faith

Islamic belief is based on six fundamental articles of faith.

1. Belief in Allah

This includes the following beliefs:

- ❖ Belief in Allah's existence: The existence of humankind and the entire universe is not a mere accident or the product of chance. The universe and everything that is in it manifests and points to the realization of a Creator.
- ❖ Belief that Allah is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Owner of the universe and its contents, the provider of everything, the Giver of life and the Causer of death.
- ❖ Belief that Allah is the only One who has the right to be worshipped.
- ❖ Allah has revealed, both in His Final Revelation, the Qur'an and through his Prophet's teachings, ninety-nine names and attributes. They offer some insight into the absolutely unique, wondrous and perfect nature of Allah. The most frequently used name is Allah, which means the 'Worshipped'. Some of those attributes are: the Everlasting, All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Self-Sufficient and Self-Sustaining. Allah

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Almighty is above all comprehension, and He does not resemble His creation, as He has said in the Qur'an:

{...There is nothing like unto Him...} (*Qur'an 42: 11*)

He has also said:

{Say: He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets, nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.} (*Qur'an 112: 1-4*)

He is the most Rich, free of all needs.

He has said in the Qur'an:

{And I did not create the *jinn* and humankind except to worship Me. I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me. Indeed, it is Allah who is the [continual] Provider, the firm possessor of strength.} (*Qur'an 51: 56-58*)

Allah's ninety-nine names and attributes have all been mentioned in the Qur'an and the statements of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him).

2. Belief in the angels

Angels are creatures created by Allah for specific functions. They are normally invisible and have no free will; they do as Allah commands them. They should not be

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worshipped. The angel, Gabriel (peace be upon him), was responsible for conveying the revelation to the prophets. Two angels are assigned to every human being to record their good and evil deeds. Another angel accompanies each human being, encouraging him or her to do good deeds. Others blow the human spirit into the foetus at the end of the fourth month of conception; yet others take the human spirit at the time of its death by Allah's permission. There are other angels that have various responsibilities, too many to enumerate in this small book.¹⁸

There are two main points of difference between the Islamic and the Christian view of angels. Although they are noble and free of sin, believing Muslims hold a greater status in the Eyes of Allah. The angels were commanded to bow to Adam (peace be upon him) due to his superior knowledge, and they all did as they were commanded. Christians, on the other hand, believe that angels are of two kinds: good/obedient and evil/disobedient. That is how they justify their belief that Satan is a 'fallen angel' - an evil angel who disobeyed God, when he did not bow to Adam with the other angels. According to Islam,

¹⁸ For more detail, see al-'Uthaymeen, *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam*.

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angels worship Allah, and cannot disobey Him; angels have no choice over whether or not to worship Allah. They are sinless beings because they obey Allah and commit no sins. This is part of the Islamic belief as well. However, both angels and humans are creatures of Allah and both are obliged to worship Him. Thus, the second main point of difference between the Christian view and the Islamic view of angels is that of free will: whereas angels have no free will, human beings might obey Allah, be sinful, follow some commandments and commit some sins.

3. Belief in the scriptures

This article of faith refers to belief in all the scriptures revealed in their original form by Allah to His messengers. Revealed scriptures form the enlightenment which the messengers received to show the right path of Allah to their people. All the revealed books call to the worship of Allah alone and forbid the worship of anything other than Him or besides Him. They contain guidance for humankind in all aspects of life. They define right and wrong, and offer human beings a complete system of beliefs and practices governing all their affairs. The Creator alone knows best what is beneficial for His creation and what is not. Thus, the divine laws contained in those scriptures command and prohibit various acts and substances to protect the human spirit, the human body, and

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human society from harm. Human beings definitely need to abide by His commandments documented in His revealed books in order to fulfil their potential by living a righteous life.

The original texts of revealed books do not differ from each other in their main doctrinal principles. However, due to the differences between nations in time and space, there were some differences in the practical teachings (laws) of the scriptures, according to the wisdom of Allah. Their basic message, however, remains the same.

Muslims believe in the previous books as mentioned in the Qur'an: the Scripture of Abraham (peace be upon him), the Torah of Moses (peace be upon him), the Psalms of David (peace be upon him) and the Gospel of Jesus (peace be upon him). The following verse from the noble Qur'an emphasizes the fact that belief in all the previous scriptures sent by Allah is an integral part of the Islamic belief system:

{Say, [O believers]: We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.} (*Qur'an 2: 136*)

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However, long before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), all these scriptures had been either lost or irretrievably corrupted by later generations over the centuries with myths, superstitions, idolatry and irrational philosophical beliefs, carrying contradicting thoughts. Hence, the existing forms of those scriptures cannot be described as Allah's revelation.

The Bible for example, is one of the remaining books in the hands of its followers. Ever since it was revealed to Jesus (peace be upon him), it has undergone so many changes that today, there are four well-known Bibles instead of one: the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John comprise the Bible (The New Testament), along with other documents.

These were written between 40 and 115 years after Jesus (peace be upon him) had left and are based on documents that have been lost. The Gospel according to Mark, was the first one written in Rome, at least 40 years after the disappearance of Jesus (peace be upon him). The Gospel according to Matthew was written in the Greek Language about 90 years after Christ. The Gospel according to Luke was written in Greece approximately 80 years after Christ. These three Gospels are called Synoptic because they originate

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from the same lost document and they have a lot in common. The Gospel according to John, on the other hand, has deep differences with the Synoptic Gospels. It is in this Gospel of John where the Divinity and pre-existence of Jesus (peace be upon him) was mentioned, even though Jesus himself never claimed this. This Gospel was written between 110 and 115 years CE.¹⁹

Analysis of these Gospels reveals the following:

1. During the lifetime of Jesus (peace be upon him), there was no written document containing his sayings, acts or lectures.
2. The first records of the sayings of Jesus (peace be upon him), which were made close to the time of his disappearance, have been lost.
3. The Gospels were written between 40 and 115 years after Jesus' 'disappearance', and were based on lost documents. As a consequence, there was a loose manipulation of the content.

¹⁹ Abdul Razak, *Study Guide, Comparative Study - Islam and Christianity*.

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4. None of the Gospel writers knew, saw or heard Jesus (peace be upon him).
5. The Gospels were written in Greek while Jesus (peace be upon him) spoke Aramaic.
6. For at least one hundred years after the Gospels were written, they did not have any canonical authority, and were changed by the writers of the different sects in order to adapt them to their own needs.
7. The present Gospels, seen as a whole, are full of contradictions.²⁰

These factors have been brought up here in order to demonstrate that the Gospel of Jesus (peace be upon him), his original message that was revealed by Allah, has not reached us in its original form. In this way, it can be affirmed that the four Gospels, included in today's Bible, cannot be considered similar or equivalent to the inspired Gospel of Jesus (peace be upon him).

²⁰ Source for points 1-7: Caraballo, *My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam*, 14-15.

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3.1 Biblical proofs of the Bible's distortion

1. The Old Testament clearly testifies that it was altered by humans. God (Allah) is quoted in Jeremiah 8:8 as saying, "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law is with us?'" But behold, **the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.**²¹
2. Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips has explained:

About five years after the end of Jesus' ministry, a young rabbi by the name of Saul of Tarsus, who claimed to have seen Jesus in a vision, began to change Jesus' way. Paul (his Roman name) had considerable respect for Roman philosophy and he spoke proudly of his own Roman citizenship. His conviction was that non-Jews who became Christians should not be burdened with the Torah²² in any respect. The author of Acts 13:39 quotes Paul as saying: And by him every one that believes is freed from everything which you could not be freed by the

²¹ Revised standard version.

²² As mentioned earlier, Torah was the book revealed to Prophet Moses.

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Law of Moses. It was primarily through the efforts of Paul that the Church began to take on its non-Jewish character. Paul wrote most of the New Testament letters (epistles), which the Church accepts as the official doctrine and inspired Scripture. These letters do not preserve the Gospel of Jesus or even represent it, instead, Paul transformed the teachings of Christ into a Hellenic (Greco-Roman) philosophy.²³

3. The clearest evidence of biblical distortion is the revision of the Bible, to the extent that it can be said that every edition is different from the previous one.

3.2 Distorting revelations is the biggest sin

The Qur'an has emphasized, in more than one verse, that distorting Allah's revelation is a severe sin. Allah has said in the Qur'an:

{So woe to those who write the scripture with their own hands, then say: This is from Allah, in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn.} (*Qur'an 2: 79*)

²³ Philips, *The True Message of Jesus Christ*, 81.

An important note

It shall be noted that those who followed the scriptures when they were in their pure and unadulterated forms are considered to be on the right religion, and will have nothing to fear on the Day of Judgement.

3.3 Revelation of the Qur'an

Following the distortion of the previous scriptures, Allah, the Most Compassionate, did not leave human beings to go astray without an unadulterated reference. Indeed, He revealed the Qur'an and promised to preserve it as the final revelation to humankind for all times. It is the Word of Allah which He revealed to Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) through the Angel Gabriel (peace be upon him). It was revealed in parts (fragments) of different lengths over a period of 23 years. Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) recited the Revelation to his Companions, who wrote it down during his lifetime on palm leaves, parchment, animal bones (the shoulder-blades of camels made a good writing surface), and flat stones. At the same time, he indicated the precise location where each revealed section belonged in the body of the complete volume of the revelation. In addition, the Qur'an was memorized by hundreds of Prophet Muhammad's Companions. One year after the death of Prophet Muhammad

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(blessings and peace be upon him), the first Caliph, Abu Bakr (*radiya Allâhu 'anhu* - may Allah be pleased with him), instructed the Prophet's Companions to collect the whole Qur'an in one volume. Later, the third Caliph 'Uthmân (may Allah be pleased with him), prepared several copies from the original text and sent them to the major centres of the Islamic civilization. One of these seven reproductions still remains, and is kept in Istanbul, Turkey.

From that time onwards, more than 1400 years ago, the same Qur'anic text has been in use with the exact wording, order and language (Arabic). Not a single word from its 114 chapters, 6200 verses, and approximately 80,000 words has been changed since it was revealed. Indeed, Allah has promised in the Qur'an to preserve it forever. He has said:

{Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian.} (*Qur'an 15: 9*)

Just ponder over the fact that the Qur'an, in its entirety, is memorized by millions of people, regardless of age, sex, social class, or ethnicity! It is the only book that has been thus preserved, not only on the shelf but in the hearts of humankind.

The Qur'an supersedes all previous scriptures. Allah has said to Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) about the Qur'an:

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{And We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the scripture and as a criterion over it... } (*Qur'an 5: 48*)

An essential point to understand about the Qur'an is that it is a miracle in terms of both its revelation and its content. At the time of the revelation and since, there have been those who have denied the divine and miraculous nature of the Qur'an saying that Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) was either taught by others or that he wrote it by himself! In order to counteract this claim, Allah has presented a challenge to the whole of humankind saying:

{And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our slave [Muhammad], then produce a chapter the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful.} (*Qur'an 2: 23*)

These are some of the prophecies which the Qur'an has foretold, as no one from the time of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), until this day, has been able to produce the like of one chapter or even a verse of the Qur'an. As such, Muslims do not need any other scriptures to base their faith on, either fully or partially. The Qur'an remains clear and easily understood by anyone who has a good command of the Arabic language. All its legal injunctions and instructions are

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clear when the meanings of its words are translated into any of the world's languages.

3.4 The entire Qur'an is a proclamation of monotheism

1. Some of the verses inform about Allah: His names, attributes, acts and speech. Those verses indicate the Unity and Oneness of Allah with respect to His most excellent names, essence, and perfect attributes.
2. Other verses point to the necessity of worshipping Allah alone, without any associate or partner, and the renunciation of the worship of anything other than Him. These verses indicate the focus of worship and the necessity for people to single out their Lord in their intentions, requesting His aid, and in turning to Him in repentance.
3. The Qur'an also contains injunctions and prohibitions; doing something that has been enjoined or refraining from what has been prohibited is the fulfilment and perfection of the affirmation of the Oneness of Allah.
4. The Qur'an includes stories and information about people of true and sincere belief and tells about their immediate reward in the life of this world as well as the immense reward reserved for them in the hereafter.

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5. The Qur'an also contains stories about those who associate partners with Allah. It describes their punishment in this life and the punishment they are promised in the hereafter. These are the just desserts of those who deviate from the affirmation of Allah's Oneness.

3.5 The Prophet's teachings

The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) are the second source of the Islamic knowledge after the Holy Qur'an. They explain and elaborate the Qur'anic verses. They also explain, in minute detail, the manner of worship as performed by the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him). The Prophet's statements provide further clarification and details as to how to fulfil what Allah has ordered and refrain from what He has forbidden. These teachings have been meticulously collected and reported by the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them).

3.6 Preservation of Islamic teachings

Preventing Islamic teachings from alteration does not stop at the preservation of the Qur'anic text; rather, it is also forbidden to introduce into the Prophet's guidance (by saying or writing) anything that is contrary to its premise, values or teachings.

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The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<Whoever introduces into this matter (the Islamic teachings) something that does not belong to it, shall find it rejected.>>
(Bukhari and Muslim)

<<One of the Prophet's Companions said: The Prophet gave us a highly effective admonition, such that many of us were tearful and felt our hearts shudder.

Someone said to him: O Messenger of Allah! This sounds like the admonition of someone bidding his audience farewell. Please outline for us what you recommend.

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said: I urge you to always remain conscious of Allah (God-fearing), and to listen to and obey your leaders, even if the leader is an Abyssinian slave. Anyone of you who will live long will witness much strife and conflict. Therefore, hold tight to my way and the way followed by the Rightly-Guided Rulers.²⁴ Hold on to it and bite onto it with your molars,²⁵ and steer away from any invented thing (in religious affairs and laws), for such inventions are

²⁴ He meant specifically the four Caliphs who came after him.

²⁵ That is, do not let go of it.

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deviations (from the right path).>> (An authentic hadith²⁶ recorded by Ibn Hibbân, Abu Dâwood and at-Tirmidhi)

Thus, in matters of religion, one is not permitted to change Islamic teachings. Whatever is contrary to it is wrong and unacceptable. With this strict protection, Islam, as it was revealed, has been kept pure from myths and superstitions as well as changes that reflect the whims of people and leaders.

4. Belief in the messengers of Allah

This article of faith addresses the belief that Allah has conveyed His message through selected human beings. These individuals, called prophets and messengers, were selected by Allah to be examples of how the scriptures were to be understood and implemented. Prophets have demonstrated practically, for their followers, how one should live by the law. The way of the prophets is the only way to Allah, because it has been prescribed by Allah Himself. Hence, without prophets, people would not know Allah, His attributes or how to worship Him.

²⁶ Hadith (*hadeeth*): the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law.

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The role of the prophets can be summarized as follows:

1. Receive the message from Allah.
2. Deliver it to the people.
3. Advise people to fear Allah and abide by His commandments.
4. Advise people who have deviated, disobeyed Allah, or worshipped anything or anyone other than Him, to repent and obey and worship Him only.
5. Inform people about the fundamental aspects of faith.
6. Teach detailed religious and moral tenets to their followers.
7. Be a model for their people, and lead them to eternal paradise.

Allah has sent a prophet or prophets to every nation; their duty was to convey the message that He alone should be worshipped and anything worshipped along with Him or besides Him is false and unacceptable. The Qur'an has mentioned the names of twenty-five prophets (see diagram) while indicating that many others existed yet were not mentioned by name. The first of these prophets was Adam (peace be upon him) and the last was Muhammad (blessings

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and peace be upon him). May Allah's mercy and peace be upon the prophets.

Every prophet was sent to a specific people for a specific era. Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) was an exception, who was sent as the last and final messenger until the hour of judgement. The proofs that Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) was a messenger of Allah are innumerable; all have been mentioned in his detailed biography. The greatest proof is the miracle of the Qur'an, which could not have been written by any human; also, it could not have been conveyed except through a Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace be upon him).

Indeed, the books of the Bible mention the advent of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), in spite of the changes which have been introduced in their content.

The Qur'an and the sayings and of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) relate, with reverence, the lives of many of these prophets. Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), the last prophet, has remained as the absolute example for his followers. His teachings were further elucidated in practice by his Rightly-Guided successors. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) encouraged his followers continuously to follow the prophets' way, and warned

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against conflict over Islamic principles and values. This was to ensure that his followers would not deviate from the right path, as had happened to the followers of previous prophets.

Prophet Muhammad's followers owe him two things: obedience and love.

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4.1 Obedience to the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) (fellowship)

Obedience to the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) has been mentioned in thirty different verses of the Qur'an. It implies following his commands and avoiding what he prohibited. Obedience to the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) indicates the true fulfilment of the second part of the declaration that brings a person into Islam, "I bear witness that Muhammad is Allah's Messenger."

When we examine anything the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) encouraged, urged or ordered, we find that it is all from Allah and that it leads to something good either for us personally or for others who are close to us in our families or for our wider community, whether it is the Muslim community in general or humanity at large. He has only prohibited what is harmful or of no benefit, like adultery, gambling, alcohol, lying, disrespect to parents and so on. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) prohibited satanic ways in many statements because these tend to pull a person away from the right path.

A good believer reaches a state of mind when his or her desires and pleasures in this life are in line with what Allah wants from him or her. Every individual should be obedient to Allah and His Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), and

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observe strictly the instructions from Allah. The spirit develops by following Islamic teachings, while it decays and suffers from a spiritual loss if these teachings are abandoned.²⁷

4.2 Loving the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him)

Islam teaches that loving the Prophet is part of the Islamic faith.

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) has been quoted as saying:

<<None of you is a true believer unless I am dearer to him than his parents, his children, and all other people.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) also said:

<<There are three qualities which are certain to give anyone the sweetness of faith: to love Allah and His Messenger more than anyone else, to love a person for no purpose other than for Allah's sake, and to hate to relapse into disbelief after Allah has saved him from it as much as one would hate to be thrown into the fire.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)

²⁷ Compiled from Caraballo, *My Great Love for Jesus Christ Led Me to Islam*.

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We are required to love Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) more than all others (except Allah) because it was through him that we learned who Allah is along with His attributes, our position in relation to Him, what Allah wants from us, and how to worship Him. He has guided us, through practical example, along the way; following this is certain to earn us Allah's acceptance and the ultimate bliss. He has spared us the worst calamity that can ever befall anyone, which is incurring Allah's anger and punishment. He sacrificed everything to deliver Allah's message to us. He sacrificed his health and wealth and his whole life. If we realize all this, how can we not love him more than we love ourselves and all others?

We love Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) because, as described in the Qur'an, he was a 'mercy for all nations'. His compassion extended to all: friends and enemies. Consider this: his enemies often became his beloved Companions and followers. They embraced Islam, saying that his character proved he was a true Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace be upon him).

It should be noted that we must love Allah more than the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him); the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) comes after Allah. Loving

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Allah, the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) and his followers is an act of worship for which one will be rewarded. The reverse is also true: hating Allah or His Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) will expel one from the bounds of Islam. Correspondingly, hating those who hate Allah or the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) is part of the Islamic belief, for which the individual will be accounted for and rewarded.

It needs to be clarified here that the emotion of ‘hate’ that is referred to in this context does not lend itself to the commonly known evil type of hate which is the imperfect human emotion; rather, it is the type of hate that perfects one’s faith as it is directed - in the right measure - against those who have taken a defiant stance against the Creator and His chosen messengers. It is a lot like the negative feeling one may hold against the actions of a human who defies and abuses his or her elderly parents in an evil manner, or an outlaw who fights the justice system and spreads fear and corruption in society. It is clear that hating the actions of such individuals is a natural feeling that good people are expected to have. Although Islam teaches love in all its forms, it also instructs faithful believers not to love those who do not love Allah and His messengers, until they change their ways, in which case, they are

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commanded to love them! In a nutshell, a Muslim loves as well as hates for Allah's sake. Here is a great fact about this emotion of hate: a Muslim is instructed not to hate anyone for personal reasons. For example, if a Muslim person has been insulted by anyone, he or she has been instructed to forgive; surely, the difference is great between hating for the sake of Allah (well-placed emotion) versus hating for self-satisfaction (a destructive emotion).

The love we should have for the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) must be genuine love, not a mere verbal statement. It should be supported and proven by obedience: following his commands and avoiding what he has prohibited. Correspondingly, again, the expression of our feelings of hate or revulsion at the refusal of our fellow human beings to believe in Allah's Oneness and follow the monotheistic teachings of His prophets should be in our positive and pro-active approach to those who disbelieve. We pray for them to be guided to the truth; at the same time, we need to work for that and work with them towards that.

5. Belief in the Last Day

Islam teaches that this life is only a test of conduct for each individual, to see whether or not he or she will follow the commands of Allah. In the hereafter, people will be resurrected;

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they will stand before Allah for a just reckoning of their deeds and actions while they were alive on earth. People with good deeds will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to Allah's heaven. However, those with records of many bad deeds will be punished and cast into hell. People have been given knowledge of right and wrong, instinctively and through revelation; they must choose their path in this short life. Their choices in this life will ultimately determine their places in the eternal life to come. Allah has said in the Qur'an:

{So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.} (*Qur'an 99: 7-8*)

Belief in the Day of Judgement implants in the human heart, the consciousness of Allah. It impels people and society at large to obey Him sincerely without any external pressure. Effectively, the hereafter for the individual starts right after his or her soul departs from the body. Shortly after the burial, two angels come to the grave and ask the following three questions (like a final examination):

Who is your Lord?

What is your religion?

Who is your prophet?

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Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said that the believer would not have difficulties in answering these questions correctly, while the unbeliever would not be able to give the right answers.²⁸ Depending upon the result, a person will begin to either suffer or enjoy his or her stay in the grave. The grave will either expand or contract, to give comfort or torture to its dweller, depending upon what they deserve. (As narrated in hadiths recorded by Bukhari and Ahmad)

6. Belief in predestination

This includes belief in the following:

- a) Allah knows everything. His knowledge is not bound by time. Past, present and future are all known to Him.
- b) Everything which takes place is already written in a book called the ‘Preserved Tablet’.
- c) Allah has created everything, including the actions of people, the good and the bad. However, He has commanded people to do good deeds and forbade them from doing evil.

²⁸ A believer believes in all the six articles of faith.

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- d) One must believe that everything that happens in this universe is happening with Allah's permission, and nothing can take place against His Will.

It should be noted that Allah's prior knowledge of things does not mean that human beings have no choice. Human beings choose, but Allah knows their choices prior to their choosing and actions. He merely **allows** them to follow through with their decisions.

10. The Five Pillars of Islam

Worship in Islam is an all-inclusive term for all actions and statements that Allah loves and approves of. Every virtuous action which is performed with the intention of carrying out the commandments of Allah and seeking His pleasure is considered to be an act of worship. Islam is built on five acts of worship which are the foundations from which all deeds emanate. They stand as the framework of spiritual life on which the structure of Islam rests. They are the following:

1. The declaration of the two testimonies of faith

“I testify that there is no deity²⁹ worthy of worship except Allah, and that Muhammad is His slave and messenger.”³⁰ The sincere declaration of this double testimony (also referred to as the testimony of monotheism) and adherence to this teachings automatically brings one within the fold of Islam and dying while believing it guarantees one a place in paradise. This is why this testimony is considered to be the cornerstone of Islam.

29 “Deity” is defined as ‘an object of worship’.

30 In Arabic: *Ash-hadu al-lâ ilâha illâ Allah, wa ash-hadu annâ Muhammadan ‘Abduhu wa Rasooluhu.*

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The acceptance of this belief distinguishes the Muslim from the non-Muslim. Hence, all actions depend upon this pillar; deeds (no matter how great) are of no avail to a person if he or she does not utter this testimony. However, there are many acts which may contradict this declaration and expel its doer from Islam as quickly as he or she came in. The most serious of those acts is worshipping other than Allah whether in the form of supplication, prayer or other acts that signify worship or belief in other than Allah.

2. Prayers

Formal prayers are prescribed five times daily as a duty to Allah at the following times: dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and nightfall. A Muslim may offer formal prayers almost anywhere as long as the location is clean. Muslim males are enjoined to pray in congregation in a mosque, while females are encouraged to pray in their homes. Prayer provides humans with regular contact with Allah, which helps them avoid evil. Furthermore, it is symbolic of equality of poor and rich, ruler and subject, dark-skinned and fair-skinned. Human beings from every conceivable background stand together, united in rows, shoulder to shoulder, and prostrate themselves before Allah. Prayer strengthens the belief in Allah and elevates the human being to a higher morality. It helps to purify the heart and

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prevent temptation towards wrongdoing and evil. This act of worship compels the believers to remember their Lord no matter where they are, night or day. In this way, prayer is continuously taking place throughout the entire world at any given moment.

3. Zakâh (Obligatory charity)

Every Muslim whose net annual savings are above a certain specified minimum must pay an annual amount of 2.5% of those savings to the poor and the needy people in the community. Zakâh fosters generosity and helps purify the soul of selfishness and greed. Zakâh also helps reduce resentment and envy between the poor and the rich members of the society. Islam is a practical religion. Not only does it safeguard the average individual and his or her rights, it protects the rights of the weaker members of the community as well.

4. Fasting the month of *Ramadan*

Fasting in Islam means abstinence from food, drink and sexual acts from dawn to sunset. It is an annual obligation during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Fasting was imposed on former communities of believers in earlier divine religions. The Qur'an states that the main purpose of fasting is to help us be more conscious of Allah and more obedient to Him. It teaches sincerity and

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engenders devotion. It helps us develop a sense of social conscience, patience, self-restraint, will power and compassion for needy members of the society.

Someone might ask: Why has Allah, in His wisdom, prescribed fasting for many nations?

The answer is that the purpose of fasting is clearly defined as being for the development of Allah-consciousness (piety) in the believer's heart, since only Allah knows who is actually fasting and who is not. Consequently, the one who is fasting refrains from eating and drinking based on an awareness of Allah. Regular fasting enhances that awareness, which subsequently leads to the implanting of righteousness in the heart of the individual.

As a secondary benefit, fasting is very beneficial to one's health. It purifies the body of toxins; it is a rest from the useless waste cluttering the body. It allows the body to recuperate and heal. It trains the body, as well as the mind, to function with an amount of food that is sufficient. Also, the needs of basic instincts of survival are kept in check, and when the individual is able to control these, other needs will be easier to control. In return for this sacrifice, Allah grants the believers great rewards and forgiveness of their sins.

5. Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah)

The Hajj is obligatory for every Muslim once in a lifetime, if one can afford it financially and bear it physically. During the Hajj, Muslims from all corners of the world meet in an international congregation dedicated to the worship of Allah. It is a great lesson in patience. The huge gatherings for the Hajj are a reminder of the Day of Judgement when all of humankind will gather for their reckoning. It emphasizes the belief that all Muslims are brothers and sisters, irrespective of their geographical, cultural, racial or social origins.³¹

31 It should be noted that the five pillars have high importance in Islam; learning and practicing them are priorities for every Muslim, whereas everything else can be learned gradually, with patience and dedication.

11. The Meaning of Worship in Islam

The meaning of worship is, simply, total submission and complete obedience to Allah's commandments in belief, intentions, statements, and actions. This is achieved by striving to do what Allah has encouraged, avoiding what He has forbidden, and worshipping Him alone according to His teachings. This is the true meaning of the **worship** of Allah or 'slavery to Allah' in Islam. May Allah enable his followers to achieve this level of worship.

12. The Moral System in Islam

Islam has unique moral teachings. These teachings call for strengthening the relationship between humans and their Lord, as well as with one another. They also call for people to correct and straighten themselves, both inwardly and outwardly.

Relation with the Lord

In the Qur'an, Allah calls people to correct and strengthen their relationship with Him and draw close to Him through spiritual and physical acts of worship, such as prayer, Hajj, supplication, and charity. In addition, the Qur'an calls us to seek knowledge about Allah through His names and attributes. This instils fear and awe of the Lord in people's hearts and establishes discipline in applying Allah's commands and prohibitions.

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) also instructed people to remember Allah at all times and in every situation. This creates a permanent connection between people and their Lord and instils stability, strength and tranquillity in their hearts. It is one of the means of protecting against evil and vice, since a Muslim will be reminded constantly that Allah is watching his or her every action. The Prophet (blessings and

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peace be upon him), for example, instructed for specific invocations to be uttered at the time of sleep, before entering the lavatory, before sexual intercourse, while travelling, when in fear, upon entering or leaving one's house, first thing in the morning and in the afternoon, on being afflicted by distress, anxiety or misfortune, when burdened by debt or poverty, upon entering a graveyard, when stopping for a rest or setting up camp, and in many other situations.

Relations with people - general

Concerning a person's relationship with others, the Qur'an promotes behaviour which strengthens and reinforces social relationships such as the importance given to the role of the family. Treating parents kindly, maintaining good relations with other family members, seeing to the rights and needs of spouses and children and dealing with them with love and mercy, and supporting orphans and the weaker members of society are all obligatory. Conversely, disobeying parents, severing family ties, neglect or abuse of spouses and children, and social isolation are all prohibited.

In addition, the Qur'an instructs that all people should be treated with high moral behaviour and noble manners. One is encouraged to smile, forgive, return harm with good, and have patience when dealing with other Muslims. Since this high code

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of moral behaviour is quite trying, Allah has promised immense reward for the one that achieves this.

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) instructed people to adopt good manners when in gatherings, such as not raising one's voice, respecting elders, being gentle with youngsters, greeting those present by saying, "Assalâmu alaykum wa rahmatu allâh wa barakâtu hu," which means 'may the peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you'. Islam also demands that we guard our tongues against saying negative things about others, even if what we wanted to say was true.

Islam also enjoins that agreements and contracts must be fulfilled, entrusted items returned, and rulers obeyed. It enjoins noble characteristics just as it forbids vileness, baseness, crime, oppression, hostility, aggression, and all other blameworthy and reprehensible qualities.

Relations with parents

Islam highly recommends kindness to parents. This command is mentioned eight times in the Qur'an. In one of the verses, Allah said to Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him):

{And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be dutiful to your parents. If one or both of them

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become old, do not say to them a word of disrespect nor shout at them, but address them in terms of honour. And be highly submissive out of mercy, and pray for them saying: My Lord, bestow on them your mercy as they brought me up when I was a child.} (*Qur'an* 17: 23-24)

<<A man asked Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him): Whom should I honour most?

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) replied: Your mother.

Then the man questioned: And who comes next?

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) answered: Your mother.

Then the man inquired again: And who comes next?

The Prophet responded: Your mother.

Then the man queried again: And who comes next?

The Prophet replied: Your father.>> (*Bukhari* and *Muslim*)

Relations with relatives

Kindness towards relatives has been promoted by most major religions. Islam, however, takes this aspect to a new dimension. Relatives have specific rights laid out by the *Sharia*

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(Islamic law). We are obliged to assist our relatives by economic as well as social means. The rights of relatives are based on nearness in blood relationship. This can be seen mostly in the rights of inheritors, which are specifically laid out in the Qur'an. The Qur'an goes a step further, even assigning rights to foster relations. A Muslim is not allowed to make a bequest that excludes any of his or her relatives who have been given a share in the inheritance. Furthermore, even the amount of charity one can assign has been limited; the rights of the relatives must be fulfilled first.

A Muslim must treat all relatives with utmost respect and kindness, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims. A Muslim is not allowed to boycott his or her relatives or cut off relations with them. Muslims are encouraged to keep in contact with them even if these relatives abandon one. Indeed, maintaining family ties is of such great importance that a Muslim is greatly rewarded for doing any good actions that promote this.

Relations with neighbours

Islam encourages treating neighbours very kindly. There is a verse in the Qur'an that sums this all up:

{...[Show] kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is related

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[to you] and the neighbour who is not related, and the fellow-traveller and the wayfarer...} (*Qur'an* 4: 36)³²

Also, the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said:
<<(The Angel) Gabriel continued to urge me to treat neighbours kindly and politely, so much that I thought he would order me to make them my heirs.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) also said:
<<Anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbour, and anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should entertain guests generously, and anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should say what is good or keep quiet.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)

One of the Prophet's neighbours used to throw trash on him regularly, as he passed by. Once, when she did not do this, he inquired about her, concerned that something was wrong. He found her ill in bed, and when she thought he would display anger or vengeance, she was surprised to find him merciful, despite her rude behaviour towards him. She then embraced

32 The translation of the meaning of this verse was taken from *The Glorious Qur'an*, translated (meanings rendered) by Muhammad M. Pickthall. (Editor)

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Islam because of his kindness. Remember, kindness to neighbours is rewarded by Allah.

Food - Moral conduct

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) taught many practical good manners, including the virtue of adopting the correct manners for eating and drinking. These include eating with one's right hand and not finding fault with the food but rather being satisfied with it. If you like the food, you should eat it, but if you have no appetite for it, you should leave it in the dish without criticizing it. This is both out of respect for the blessing of the food and in order to avoid hurting the feelings of the person who has cooked it or offered it. It is also preferred for us to eat with others and not alone, either by eating with family or by inviting a poor person to eat with us. '*Bismillâh*' (with the name of Allah I start) is said before beginning to eat, and '*Alhamdulillâh*' (all praise belongs to Allah) is said after the meal, in order that people remember the blessing they have been given and the One who provided it. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) also prohibited people from blowing on food or drink or breathing onto it, out of respect for others who may be sharing it and to avoid the spread of contagious diseases.

Hygiene - Islamic moral conduct

Islam also enjoins both physical and spiritual cleanliness. It encourages that we keep our bodies clean, along with our clothes and our shoes. Islam has guided Muslims for their well-being, down to the minute details. For example, a Muslim is encouraged to wash thoroughly after using the toilet, clean the teeth often (especially with the *siwâk*, or toothbrush), and shower after sexual relations.

Spiritual - Islamic moral conduct

Concerning spiritual purity, the Qur'an instructs that the soul should be straightened and corrected and that the heart should be purified from spite, malice, jealousy, pride and inequity. It calls for integrity of heart and love, affection and humility towards people. It instructs that the tongue should be purified from lying, backbiting, slander, and insult. It should then be replaced with truthfulness and softness in speech. Islam encourages unity, so much so that a Muslim is encouraged to give as many excuses as he or she could for suspected bad behaviour or speech on the part of his or her fellow Muslims. Also, the wealth, property, and life of a Muslim are held sacred: this means that no one else has the right to interfere with these without the Muslim's express permission. The enormity of sins such as slander and backbiting is emphasized in many verses of

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the Qur'an, and a chapter of the Qur'an (chapter 104) is dedicated to this very subject.

We should restrain our eyes from looking at that to which they are not entitled (such as the private parts of others), and we should keep our ears from listening to loose and immoral talk, including lewd lyrics.

The Qur'an praises and encourages knowledge and criticizes ignorance, saying that it leads to destruction. It commands people to action and dynamism while prohibiting wasteful talk and laziness.

Family structure and rights

It also orders that children should be born within a legal marriage and that sexual desire should be controlled and contained within these parameters.

To uphold the family structure and the well-being of society, the Qur'an prohibits fornication because it is one of the worst assaults on a person's honour and dignity. It is something which causes disease and produces children who are looked upon by society as 'illegitimate'. Likewise, the Qur'an forbids everything which leads to fornication, so it prohibits looking at pornographic pictures and being alone with women who are not

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close relatives.³³ It also commands that men should lower their gaze from looking or staring at women whom they have no right to look at. Muslim women thus enjoy protection and security and can be confident that a Muslim man will not even look at her if not permitted to. The same prohibitions hold for women gazing at men unlawfully.

Decency and veiling

With this same reasoning, Islam enjoins morality in behaviour and appearance. Fashions that reduce women to sex objects are not acceptable. Islamic veiling is a means of protection from unwanted external attention. Allah says in the Qur'an:

{O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused...} (*Qur'an* 33: 59)

That means, women may wear whatever they wish in the privacy of their own homes and in the presence of their

33 Close relatives are men's mothers, daughters, sisters, nieces, and wives.

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husbands, where they will receive only the type of attention they desire.

The rights of the wife

Islam urges men to be kind to their wives. Allah says in the Qur'an:

{... He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy...} (*Qur'an 30: 21*)

Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<The best of you are those who are kindest to their wives.>>
(Recorded by Ibn Mâjah with a sound chain of narration)

This is because one can be kind in public where everyone is watching, yet be mean and cruel at home. Islam holds Muslims accountable even in this situation, where their true nature may be revealed. This is the true test of moral behaviour.

In Islam, the wife retains her independent legal status and family name. She is not the property of her husband in any way, but she has many rights due to her from him, as he does from her.

In Islam, it is the husband's obligation to give his wife a valuable gift at the time of marriage. The groom must present

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the bride with a marriage dowry. The bride retains her dowry even if she is later divorced. The wife is never obliged to act as a co-provider for the family unless she herself voluntarily chooses to do so. It is the husband's sole responsibility to support his family financially. Islam gives women (whether married, divorced or single) the right to inherit, own and trade.

Polygyny

Polygyny (having more than one wife) is permitted in Islam as a solution to social problems. It addresses the problem of orphans and widows in society. It is also a solution which promotes honesty and matrimonial trustworthiness (especially within the family) for those who have a desire or need for more than one sexual partner, instead of having one wife and taking mistresses. Thus, instead of having an extramarital affair, Islam requires the man to take responsibility for his actions. Islam limits polygyny to a maximum of four wives at one time. However, it requires the husband to maintain absolute equality in his treatment of his wives, caring for each financially and emotionally in the exact same manner. It should be noted that if a woman is unhappy in this situation, and she fears that she will be unable to fulfil her responsibilities to her husband as well as to Allah, she could opt out of the marriage. A man is not allowed to force her to remain married.

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Divorce rules

Islam is a religion of moderation. Although divorce is allowed when necessary, family unity is encouraged. For example, in the event of a divorce, the two spouses are encouraged to bring arbitrators from their family members to help reconcile them. Islam discourages divorce, yet recognizes the rights of both partners to end their matrimonial relationship if circumstances dictate it. Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<A believing man should not hate a believing woman. If he dislikes one of her traits he will be pleased with another.>>
(Recorded by Muslim)

Therefore Islam is realistic about the option of divorce, yet also encourages solutions to hold the marriage together.

It is clear that women in Islam are honoured for their roles as mothers. Islam acknowledges that a woman sacrifices her life for her children, and thus, she is given an honour above that of the father.

Protection of life

The Qur'an also calls for the protection and sanctity of human life and specifically mentions that the taking of an innocent life is one of the worst and most hideous crimes. The

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Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) forbade breaking the bones of a dead person, so what about the taking of an innocent life? The Qur'an prescribes 'a life for a life' and 'an eye for an eye' for all injuries, however large or small, unless the family of the person killed or the injured person accepts financial compensation instead.

Protection of property

The Qur'an commands that a person's property and wealth should be safe and inviolable and therefore, it prohibits theft, bribery, usury and deception. It calls for moderation in spending and hence, forbids extravagance, lavishness and the squandering of money while at the same time forbidding the hoarding and amassing of wealth. It calls for balance, and commands that people should neither be greedy, stingy and covetous nor extravagant and wasteful. It encourages people to seek their means of livelihood and their provision in lawful ways such as buying, selling and renting (activities that bring financial or material benefit to all parties concerned). As mentioned, Islam also safeguards the rights and needs of the poor, especially those who are relatives or in one's own community, so that they do not have to go elsewhere to seek help.

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Maintaining health

Islam promotes the protection of good health and has therefore commanded that only wholesome and nutritious food be eaten, and eaten in moderation. It has prohibited the consumption of all harmful food and drink such as pork, carrion, tobacco, alcohol and other intoxicants (mind-altering substances), and so forth. It also prescribes fasting, which has many benefits for the body, especially the digestive system.

Animal rights

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) commanded for animals to be treated fairly and with kindness, instructing that they should be fed and watered. He promised that such actions would be rewarded on the Day of Resurrection. He also instructed that they should not be made to carry a burden more than they could bear, nor tormented or caused undue suffering or killed unless they were harmful. If an animal is to be slaughtered as food then it should not be slaughtered in front of other animals. This is to avoid making the animal suffer.

Rights of the deceased

Islam maintains respect for the person even after death. When a Muslim dies, he or she must be buried according to the

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teachings of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him). The body of the person is washed and perfumed. Then it is wrapped in two pieces of white cloth and the body is buried facing the *Kaaba*.

We are advised to hold the deceased's body gently to ensure that its bones do not break. Before and after the burial, people are encouraged to pray that Allah forgive the deceased and admit him or her into paradise. Islam prohibits sitting on or walking over the grave, in another sign of respect for the dead.

13. Islam and Other Religions

One may ask, “If all true religions came with the same message, namely the worship of Allah alone, then why do we find such differences between them?” The answer is that the original forms of these earlier messages were either lost or distorted by later generations. Consequently, the pure messages of monotheism became polluted with myths, superstitions, idolatry and irrational philosophical beliefs; hence, those religions no longer represent the embodiment of Allah’s revelations. However, Allah, the Compassionate, did not leave human beings without guidance. He ultimately sent Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) to revive the original message and to call human beings back to the correct path: belief in the unique Oneness of Allah and worship of Him according to His teachings mentioned in the Qur'an. Consequently, Islam is the seal and completion of all religions, the Qur'an is the seal and completion of all revealed books, and Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) is the seal of all prophets - the final prophet.

14. Features of Islamic Teachings

Allah has made the message of Islam easy to understand and to follow. He annulled some previously prescribed rites and practices while affirming others according to His wisdom. As a result, the Islamic creed and law suit peoples' spiritual, psychological, social and economical needs, for all of humankind and for all eras.

Islamic teachings have the following unique features:

1. Rationality

One should not have to derive the truth from a series of complicated logical proofs, only to arrive at something he or she is unsure of (as is common in other religions or philosophies). When the truth is found, it should be clear and obvious. The truth is so simple that anyone is capable of seeing it, and this is the most compelling feature of Islam.

2. Perfection

Since Allah is perfect, His teachings must also be perfect and free from any contradiction or error. The Qur'an challenges its readers to find any errors in it, if they do not believe it is really from Allah:

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{Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.} (*Qur'an* 4: 82)

Dr. Maurice Bucaille, a French Christian physician, found many scientific facts mentioned in the Qur'an that were not known by humans at the time that the verses of the Qur'an were being conveyed by Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) to those around him. Bucaille wrote, "I could not find a single error in the Qur'an."³⁴

3. Clarity

Allah is the Most Compassionate. He therefore guides people through clear and simple revelation free of myths, superstitions and mysteries.

4. Scientific validity and accuracy

It is not surprising to find in the Qur'an and statements of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) information which has only recently been discovered by modern science. This indicates that the Qur'an is the word of Allah and that Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) is His

34 Bucaille, *The Qur'an and Modern Science*.

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Prophet. On the other hand, the religious views which the church presented concerning God, the Bible, and the individual's relation to God forced people into an unfortunate choice: either science or God. Most educated people have come to the conclusion that one cannot be a scientist or an educated person and be a true Christian at the same time. Many philosophers, scientists and the majority of lay people lost hope of reconciling religion and science; thus the ideology of secularism was developed. This dichotomy would not have arisen if the original Gospel which was revealed to Jesus (blessings and peace be upon him) had not been distorted. Islam, the pure religion, raises no contradiction whatsoever between religion and science. This is naturally obvious because both religion and true scientific knowledge are from the same source: Allah, who does not contradict Himself.³⁵

35 For more information on the many scientific facts that are referenced in the Qur'an, see *The Qur'an and Modern Science* by Dr. Maurice Bucaille and *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*, by I. A. Ibrahim, also available at www.islam-guide.com.

5. Prophetic fulfilment

Many of the events prophesied in the Qur'an and in the Prophet's statements have come to pass. This is further proof that Islam is not a man-made religion because it is unimaginable for an uneducated man who was living isolated from other civilizations to make up such prophecies.

6. Moderation

In Islam, there is no conflict between spiritual and worldly life. Rather, it provides a balance between all aspects of human life, taking into account the needs and wants of individuals and society. Therefore, secularism, materialism, monasticism and extreme asceticism are all rejected in Islam, which provides a middle way to achieve harmony and balance between the spiritual and material needs of people. This is why Allah has called the Muslim nation in the Qur'an as a:

{...just community [moderate nation]...} (*Qur'an 2: 143*)

7. Comprehensiveness

Islamic teachings provide people with definite guidelines to follow in all aspects of life: spiritual, individual, social, moral, political, economical, and so on.

8. Uniqueness

For anyone who claimed that Islam was man-made, Allah challenges them to:

{...produce a chapter the like thereof...} (*Qur'an* 2: 23)

Indeed, the entire Qur'an - its language, its elegance, its miraculous nature - is unparalleled. The ancient non-Muslim Arabs tried to construct a verse yet failed, even though their language and poetry was very highly developed in that era. Even many recent non-Muslim scholars admit that the Qur'an is one of the greatest books known to humankind. This point ultimately leads to the fact that Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) - the illiterate - was a true prophet to whom the Qur'an was revealed.

9. Justice

All of humankind descended from one man and one woman (Adam and Eve). Islam teaches that the criterion by which each human being is judged is righteousness, not the colour of one's skin or one's status in society. The best person in the view of Allah is the most righteous. A verse of the Glorious Qur'an reads:

{...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...} (*Qur'an* 49: 13)

15. Islam, the Universal Religion

Islam is a universal message to all of humankind and for all times, until the Day of Judgement, whereas every other prophet was sent to his own people, and for a limited time period. Prophet Jesus' mission was limited to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel'.³⁶ Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent for everyone: male or female, rich or poor, Arab or non-Arab, slave or freeborn. Islam can be practiced anywhere on the earth; it is not tied to locality or culture. So, if you are not from the tribes of Israel (the descendants of the twelve sons of Prophet Jacob) as in the case of Indians, Asians, Africans, indigenous peoples and Europeans, and you are a Christian, then you are following a prophet (Jesus) and a message which was not meant for you. This means you are not on the right track!

³⁶ Matthew 15:24.

16. Why Islam?

Every person should revert to Islam because it is the birthright of every person and the original print on every human soul when he or she was born.

Every person should revert to Islam because Allah has sealed and superseded all previous messages with Islam. Allah has mentioned to all people in the Qur'an:

{...This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion...} (*Qur'an 5: 3*)

Every person should revert to Islam because people in every age must worship their Lord (Allah) according to the law prescribed by Him as revealed to His Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him). The tribes of Israel, for example, were ordered to worship Allah according to the Law of Moses. When Prophet Jesus was sent to them, they were ordered to worship Allah according to what was prescribed in the Gospel. Then when Allah sent Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) with the message of Islam to all people, it became incumbent on all people, **the tribes of Israel and all others**, to enter Islam.

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After all, what could be more serious than the rejection of the religion which the Creator and Sustainer of everything has enjoined upon all people? Indeed, this is the greatest injustice committed by human beings. It is sad but true that if a person dies in this state, he or she will be punished and cast into the hellfire to live there for eternity. This concept has been emphasized hundreds of times in the Qur'an and in the statements of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him). Allah has mentioned in the Qur'an:

{And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the hereafter, will be among the losers.} (*Qur'an 3: 85*)

Also, Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<Whoever among the Christians and Jews hears of me and does not follow what I have brought, and dies in this state will be among the inhabitants of hellfire.>> (*Muslim*)

Note that Allah was reported to have said in the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18, "If anyone does not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account." (Deuteronomy 18:19)

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Having proved that the prophet referred to here is Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), this means that whoever believes in the Bible must believe in this prophet and in what this prophet says; else, he or she will be called to account for that. After the realization of who this prophet is, it follows logically that one must adhere to his teachings.

There are those who may not accept Islam because they think that becoming a Muslim means to turn one's back on all previous prophets sent by Allah. This is a false concept because of the following:

Firstly, belief in all messengers of Allah is a pillar of Islamic faith and hence, no Muslim is a believing Muslim if he or she does not believe in Jesus, Moses or any other prophet.

Secondly, belief in the messengers is a part of what each messenger taught (that is, every prophet called his people to believe in the next prophet who comes after him and follow him whenever he appears). So, rejecting a prophet amounts to rejecting the predecessor.

Thirdly, rejecting any messenger amounts to the rejection of the One Who sent him: Allah.

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Fourthly, Islam promises the followers of previous faiths great rewards if they add belief in Islam to belief in their previous faith.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<Three people have a double reward: a person from the People of the Scriptures (the Jews and the Christians) who believed in his prophet (Jesus or Moses) and then believes in Prophet Muhammad (by embracing Islam)...>> (Bukhari)

The first reward is for believing in his or her faith before he or she knew about Islam; the second reward is for recognizing the truth and believing in Islam.

Hence, the Islamic perspective on the relationship between the messengers is like the relationship between the links in a chain; rejecting one of them amounts to rejecting all of them. Therefore, becoming a Muslim means having the honour of believing in all the prophets who came before Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) and not turning one's back on any previous prophets.

Finally, we have to accept Islam because Islam has revived the eternal divine teachings that had been either forgotten or distorted in the previous messages. Islam retains

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and maintains the practical teachings mentioned in the previous scriptures that are part of the birthright of all people till the end of this world.

17. A Final Call to Reason

A concluding suggestion: consider what everyone has in common. Come, let us reason together:

{Say: O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah. But if they turn away, then say: **Bear witness that we are Muslims** [submitting to Him].} (*Qur'an 3: 64*)

{People of the Scripture} is the respectful title given to the Jews and the Christians in the Noble Qur'an. Muslims are being commanded to invite them with noble and respectful words: O People of the Book, O learned people, O people who claim to be the recipients of Divine revelation of a holy scripture, let us gather onto a common platform: that we worship none but Allah, because none but Him is worthy of worship, because He is our Lord and Cherisher, our Sustainer and Evolver, worthy of all praise, prayer and devotion.

These truths are basic and an integral part of any human being's intellect. Sort through the layers of indoctrination which

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hide this simple fact, and one will be able to see that deep down, every human being retains the simple and obvious concept of Allah. In essence, every human being agrees that there is only One God worthy of worship, One God who is free of partners, helpers, or anything that is ascribed to Him falsely.

18. This is it

In this book, you have been shown the right path, and Allah has given you the ability to distinguish right from wrong; He has also given you the freedom of choice as to whether or not to accept the message of Islam. If you accept His call, you will be warmly welcomed into paradise. If you reject it, you will end up with the biggest loss ever imagined: the loss of paradise and the guarantee of abiding in hellfire for all eternity. Take a moment to comprehend what **eternity** really means. It is a very frightening realization.

To those who have been faithful Christians, you are warmly welcome to embrace Islam because:

- ❖ Jesus asked his followers to follow Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) whenever he appeared;³⁷
- ❖ When Jesus comes back before the end of this world, he will follow Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) and abide by his teachings.³⁸

³⁷ See for more discussion: 'Who Deserves to be Worshipped?', Chapter: "The Amazing Prophecies of Muhammad in the Bible. See Appendix.

³⁸ See for more discussion: "Who Deserves to be Worshipped?",

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Yes, since Jesus called his true followers to follow it while he was on the earth, and will follow Islam when he comes back, all faithful Christian should follow Islam as well.

To those who have been believing Jews, remember that Abraham and Moses surrendered themselves completely to their Lord, whether they called Him Elohenu, God, or Allah. All pride in ethnicity or ancestry is vain: what will matter in the end is your individual relationship with your Creator. This means total submission - Islam.

To those of other faiths or who, until now, did not feel that they had any faith at all, consider this message **now**, without any reluctance or hesitation, before it is too late; **before death overtakes you.** It can be soon. Who knows?

19. A Whisper

Some people are not able to find the truth because of their blind commitment to their beliefs. Their tenacious adherence is usually not based on an intellectual understanding of the teachings, but on powerful cultural and emotional influences. Because they were brought up in a particular family or society, they firmly cling to the beliefs of that group, believing that they are upholding the truth.

There are others who are convinced about the religion of Islam and are mentally ready to embrace it. However, when they come to the point when they remember the drastic change in their lives which might not please their families and communities, they tend to go back and change their minds about the decision.

Here is a whisper in their ears:

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Irrespective of the amount of money, prestige, position, and power an unbeliever might have possessed in this life, he or she will never have enough to buy his or her entrance into paradise. In the hereafter, the poorest from among the inhabitants of earth, who had testified to the truth of Islam, will be far happier and more dignified than the richest person who did not accept the message of Islam.

Rejecting Allah's message is the biggest sin that one can commit. For this reason, while the soul of an unbeliever is still in his or her body, the wise individual should quickly utilize the occasion: he or she is still alive to accept Allah's message before it is too late. The time for repentance is limited. Once death arrives, it is no longer possible to obtain forgiveness.³⁹ Allah has mentioned in the Qur'an:

{[For such is the state of the disbelievers], until, when death comes to one of them, he says: My Lord, send me back that I

³⁹ Compiled from Caraballo, *My Great Love for Jesus Led Me to Islam*.

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might do righteousness in that which I left behind. No! It is only a word he is saying...}⁴⁰ (*Qur'an* 23: 99-100)

Religion is, without question, the most important aspect of a person's life as it impacts whether or not a person is rightly guided; it follows, therefore, that choosing the true faith is the most important personal decision one must make; this decision needs to be based on clarity and total conviction. When it comes to matters of religion and creed, nothing must be left to chance. This is because the one who is truly guided - as opposed to the one who is not - will surely find eternal happiness in the hereafter!

Being presented with the previous proofs, whoever has a sane intellect can analyze and reason; a crossroad has been reached, in which Allah (Glorified is He) calls all people to follow the clear, straight road and avoid all the foggy, zigzag ones. The right path has now become distinct from the wrong path, as Allah has mentioned in the Qur'an:

⁴⁰ The unbelievers will ask for a 'second chance' when they see the angels ready to punish them, but it will be too late; they were given the time, the intellect and the guidance, but they neglected it for years till time ran out.

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{...The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in tâghoot and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.} (*Qur'an* 2: 256)

He has also specified:

{There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in tâghoot and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.} (*Qur'an* 2: 256)

It is my duty and responsibility, as a member of this great planet, and as the one who has submitted my free will to the law and commandments of the Supreme Being, to urge all human beings to stay away from the worship of false deities, to stop putting their faith in statues, sphinxes, figures, amulets, talismans, horseshoes, and any other objects that have been manufactured by humans or created by God. After repentance, a person should submit completely to the will of Allah, the Only God of the universe.

20. How to Become a Muslim

Every religion has its own requirements for conversion: If someone wants to become Jewish, he or she needs to be able to pledge all of the following:

- 1) To enter the ‘eternal covenant’ between God and the people of Israel and to become a Jew of his or her own free will;
- 2) To accept Judaism to the exclusion of all other religious faiths and practices, which means to deny the prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) and to deny the revelations that God sent to humankind through them;
- 3) To pledge undivided loyalty to Judaism and to the Jewish people under all circumstances;
- 4) To commit to learning the Torah and Jewish knowledge; and
- 5) To raise his or her children as Jews.

To be a Christian one must:

- 1) Believe that God (Allah) has a partner, a mother, and a son;

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- 2) Believe that every new-born baby is born sinful;
- 3) Believe that God became a man and descended to the earth to die for the sins of the people;
- 4) Deny the prophethood of Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) publicly; and
- 5) Deny that the Qur'an is revelation from Allah.

However, to become a Muslim is simple:

- 1) Bear witness that no one deserves worship except Allah (disown all false gods);
- 2) Bear witness that Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) is His messenger;
- 3) Believe in all the six articles of faith; and
- 4) Worship Allah as taught by Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him).

Hence, becoming a Muslim is a simple and easy process. If anyone has a real desire to be a Muslim and has full belief that Islam is the true religion of God, all he needs to do is to pronounce the *shahâdah*, the testimony of faith. Pronunciation of this testimony with a sincere heart enters the person into the folds of Islam. It is the main gate to Islam.

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Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<Whoever testifies that there is none worthy of being worshipped but Allah, Who has no partner, and that Muhammad is His slave and Prophet, and that Jesus is the slave of Allah, His Prophet, and His word⁴¹ which He bestowed in Mary and a spirit created from Him; and that paradise (heaven) is true, and that the hellfire is true, Allah will eventually admit him into paradise, according to his deeds.>> (Bukhari)

The first part of the testimony consists of the most important word of truth that Allah has ever revealed to His noble prophets, “There is nothing divine or worthy of being worshipped except for Allah.” He has stated in the Holy Qur'an:

{And We sent not before you any messenger except that We revealed to him that: There is no deity except Me, so worship Me.} (*Qur'an 21: 25*)

Bearing this testimony implies that all forms of worship, whether it is praying, fasting, invoking, seeking refuge in, and

⁴¹ It means that Jesus was created when Allah said the 'word': Be; when He said it, he was created in the womb of his mother, Mary.

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offering an animal as sacrifice, must be directed to Allah and to Him alone. Directing any form of worship to other than Allah (whether it is an angel, a messenger, Jesus, Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), a saint, an idol, the sun, the moon, or a tree) is considered to be a contradiction to the fundamental message of not only Islam, but of all the prophets; it is an unforgivable sin in the hereafter unless one repents before death.

The second part of the testimony means that Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) is the slave⁴² and the chosen messenger of Allah. This implies that a true Muslim obeys and follows the commands of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) as mentioned in the collections of his Hadith. One must believe in what he has said, practice his teachings and avoid what he has forbidden as the Hadith were, in fact, revelations and inspirations conveyed to him by Allah.

As mentioned earlier, Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) was sent in order to practically implement the Qur'an in his saying, deeds, legislation as well as all the

⁴² The meaning of ‘slavery to Allah’ was explained earlier in chapter 11: “The Meaning of Worship in Islam.”

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other facets of life. ‘Â’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), when asked about his character, replied:

<<His character was that of the Qur’ân.>> (Muslim and Abu Dâwood)

Hence, to truly adhere to the second part of the shahâdah is to follow his example in all walks of life. Allah has mentioned:

{Say, [O Muhammad]: If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.} (*Qur’ân 3: 31*)

A true Muslim must try to mold his or her life and character and emulate the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), as he was a living example for humans to follow. Allah has said to His Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him):

{And indeed, you are of a great moral character.} (*Qur’ân 68: 4*)

Allah has also said to all people:

{There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the last day and [who] remembers Allah often.} (*Qur’ân 33: 21*)

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Upon entering the folds of Islam, all of one's previous sins are forgiven; one starts a new life of piety and righteousness since he or she, in essence, has repented from the ways and beliefs of their previous life. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said to a person, who had placed the condition upon the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) in accepting Islam that Allah would forgive his sins:

<<Do you not know that accepting Islam destroys all sins which come before it?>> (Muslim)

As soon as a person accepts Islam, he or she will be free of all the sins committed before his or her acceptance. The person's record will be wiped clean, and it will be as if he or she was born that very day. One should try as much as possible to keep his or her records clean and strive to do as many good deeds as possible; the more he or she does the more he or she will be elevated in paradise.

It shall be emphasized again that accepting Islam does not mean to turn one's back on the messages of previous prophets (peace be upon them all). Indeed, it is a fulfilment of those messages. Therefore, if you are a Jew or a Christian accepting Islam and following Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace

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be upon him) is a fulfilment of the messages which Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) brought.⁴³

However, rejecting Islam means to turn one's back not only on Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) but also to his preceding prophets (Moses and Jesus). This is actually a clear violation of their messages, which diminishes one's hope of paradise in the hereafter.

It is now up to you to decide your own future home. Wish you all the best!

⁴³ This important point is proven in many different works entitled 'Muhammad in the Bible'. They are available both on the Internet and in bookstores.

21. To Sum it Up...

The creation and existence of everything in this world has a purpose and wisdom behind it. Human beings are the superior creation as Allah has given them the intellect, has created everything for them, and has given them power and knowledge over most of the creation. There is, obviously, a specific purpose behind their existence, which is what has been elaborated in this book.

A wise person is expected to behave and act in accordance with the purpose of his or her existence; he or she should not remain oblivious from the final destination which he or she is going to hit one day or another.

22. Conclusion

The following twenty-five facts were discussed in this book:

First, the purpose of creation is to worship Allah alone.

Second, the basic message of Islam is to worship Allah alone without any intercessor or mediator. Any form of worship that is not dedicated to Allah alone, will be rejected as one form of polytheism, which amounts to apostasy from the Islamic point of view.

Third, the evidence that only Allah has the right to be worshipped was elaborated.

Fourth, Islam is a restatement of the basic message of all religions: worship Allah alone. It is the last religion for all people and for all times. So, whether they were raised as Jews, Christians, Hindus, atheists, or with any other creed, everyone, once they hear about it should follow it, become a Muslim and pronounce the testimony right away, without further delay; whoever rejects it is considered to have rejected the message of Allah, and accordingly will be cast into hell. Such a person cannot expect guidance, for he or she has deliberately renounced guidance.

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Fifth, Islam is uniquely rational, simple and uncomplicated. It rejects all forms of polytheism and false beliefs.

Sixth, both the divine origin of the name of the religion 'Islam' and the comprehensiveness of its meaning point to its truth.

Seventh, the message of false religions is paganism (the worship of creatures, rather than the Creator).

Eighth, Islam is the only religion today that teaches the right concept of Allah, free of any confusion or irrational facts.

Ninth, Islam's basic principles and characteristics point to its truth.

Tenth, indeed, Islam is the only religion that fights extremism - whether that extremism comes from secularism and materialism or from excessive spiritualism. Islam ensures a balance between spiritual, moral and materialistic needs. It is truly the middle path and is a perfectly balanced way of life. This should not be surprising because Islamic teachings are not manmade, but have been revealed to humanity by Allah the Creator, the Most Wise, the Most Knowledgeable.

Eleventh, the truth of every religion relies on the accuracy with which the original revelation from Allah was preserved.

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This rule is only satisfied by Islamic teachings. The Qur'an is the final word of Allah which has been preserved throughout the ages. Hence, it supersedes all previous scriptures.

Twelfth, Islam is the final religion, and intended for all humankind. All people therefore have an obligation to embrace it.

Thirteenth, Allah and His creation are totally different entities. He is One, distinct from His creations.

Fourteenth, Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) was sent to all people. He is the last Prophet and his teaching, Islam, will remain as the only correct and authentically revealed teaching until the Day of Judgement.

Fifteenth, prophets are human beings sent by Allah to convey and revive the original message: worship of Allah alone (monotheism) and being careful not to worship anything other than Him. Prophets are only human beings sent by Allah to be examples of how the scriptures were to be understood and implemented.

Sixteenth, the reality of the prophets, their uniform message, and the way of life is revived and can only be found preserved in Islamic teachings, manifested in the Qur'an and the statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and

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peace be upon him). They are the only authentic and proven resource documents today which preserve the facts about Jesus, Moses and their messages. They guide those who follow these sources to a way of life which is more consistent with the way of life of Jesus and Moses than that practiced by most Christians and Jews themselves. They guide to the love and respect of both of them, and of all the prophets.

Seventeenth, Islam considers disrespect of any prophet as stepping out from the boundaries of Islam.

Eighteenth, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virtuous woman, honoured above the women of all nations in that time.

Nineteenth, oral traditions passed on for generations were substantially changed from the original message. People who had not seen Jesus began to write books focusing on his personality more than his message. These articles became overly exaggerated, losing the true essence of his existence and message. They exalted him to extreme heights. This then posed a problem for Christianity as divisions in the doctrine arose, with each group espousing their own theories and explanations. This resulted in variant notions of the crucifixion, the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the divine ‘sonship’ of Christ, Original Sin, and atonement. The following cardinal doctrines of Christianity are rejected by Islam:

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- ❖ The Trinity
- ❖ The divinity of Jesus
- ❖ The notion that Jesus is the son of God
- ❖ Original sin
- ❖ Atonement (reconciliation between God and humankind brought about by the life and death of Jesus)
- ❖ Redemption (salvation from sin through Jesus' sacrifice)

Twentieth, the way to please Allah has been detailed for us. The Qur'an defines it clearly and the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) gives us details at every point.

Twenty-first, God (Allah) is One, His message is one, and the way to Him is one: namely Islam. Allah has specified in the Qur'an:

{And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous.} (*Qur'an 6: 153*)

Last but not least, Islam is your birthright. Yes, you read correctly. Islam is your right. Every human being was born into the religion of Islam and human beings are naturally drawn to what they already know. Thus when an individual

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accepts Islam, he or she is not turning the back on any prior revelation but rather returning to the original pure belief he or she was created in. This being the case, Islam is our birthright, whereas other religious or ideological systems teach to deviate from the pure belief we were created in.

These are the twenty-two basic components which logically and rationally dictate that Islam should be considered as the last and true religion of Allah, so all people should follow it.

May the light of truth shine in our minds and in our hearts. May it lead us to peace and certitude in this life and eternal bliss in the hereafter.

Kind regards,

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Appendix

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Online information about Islam

You may also wish to visit the following web sites for up-to-date information and a wealth of reading material:

www.islamfortoday.com

www.islam-guide.com

www.islamonline.net

www.islamtomorrow.com

www.missionislam.com

Online bookstores

www.al-hidaayah.co.uk

www.dar-us-salam.com

www.iiphonline.com

www.soundvision.com

Glossary of Islamic Terms*

<i>Da‘wah</i>	دعوة	disseminating the teachings of Islam and calling people to accept and embrace Islam
<i>Hajj</i>	حج	the major pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque, site of the Kaaba at Makkah, to be undertaken by every able Muslim once in his or her lifetime
<i>jinn</i> (plural of <i>jinni</i>)	جن	non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire, often referred to as ‘demons’ or ‘devils’; They have free will like humans: some are Muslims, others disbelievers;

* The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (i.e., is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.

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		some are obedient to Allah, others disobedient. Satan is a jinni. Some people try to ‘foretell’ the future by contacting a jinni. Some disobedient jinn mislead people into thinking that they can tell them what will happen in the future, near or far, or that the jinn can provide people with riches or some sort of power.
<i>Kaaba (Ka'bah)</i>	الكعبة	the House of Allah in Makkah, originally built by Prophets Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel
<i>Ramadan</i>	رمضان	the ninth month in the Islamic calendar; the month of obligatory fasting
<i>Sharia (shari'ah)</i>	شريعة	Islamic law derived from the Qur'an and the statements and actions of the Prophet.

The Purpose of Creation

<i>tâghoot</i>	طاغوت	idols; everything evil that is worshipped besides Allah
Zakât (<i>zakâh</i>)	زكاة	obligatory charity: an 'alms tax' on wealth payable by Muslims and to be distributed to poor Muslims who qualify as recipients.